

Calendar No. 606

110TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 2721

To amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to prescribe the binding oath or affirmation of renunciation and allegiance required to be naturalized as a citizen of the United States, to encourage and support the efforts of prospective citizens of the United States to become citizens, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 5, 2008

Mr. ALEXANDER introduced the following bill; which was read the first time

MARCH 6, 2008

Read the second time and placed on the calendar

A BILL

To amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to prescribe the binding oath or affirmation of renunciation and allegiance required to be naturalized as a citizen of the United States, to encourage and support the efforts of prospective citizens of the United States to become citizens, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

2 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the
3 “Strengthening American Citizenship Act of 2007”.

4 (b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for
5 this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

Sec. 2. Definitions.

TITLE I—LEARNING ENGLISH

Sec. 101. English fluency.

Sec. 102. Savings provision.

TITLE II—EDUCATION ABOUT THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE

Sec. 201. American citizenship grant program.

Sec. 202. Funding for the Office of Citizenship.

Sec. 203. Restriction on use of funds.

Sec. 204. Reporting requirement.

TITLE III—CODIFYING THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Sec. 301. Oath or affirmation of renunciation and allegiance.

TITLE IV—CELEBRATING NEW CITIZENS

Sec. 401. Establishment of new citizens award program.

Sec. 402. Naturalization ceremonies.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

8 (1) OATH OF ALLEGIANCE.—The term “Oath
9 of Allegiance” means the binding oath (or affirma-
10 tion) of allegiance required to be naturalized as a
11 citizen of the United States, as prescribed in sub-
12 section (e) of section 337 of the Immigration and
13 Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1448(e)), as added by sec-
14 tion 301(a)(2).

1 (2) SECRETARY.—Except as otherwise provided,
2 the term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Home-
3 land Security.

4 **TITLE I—LEARNING ENGLISH**

5 **SEC. 101. ENGLISH FLUENCY.**

6 (a) EDUCATION GRANTS.—

7 (1) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Chief of the Office
8 of Citizenship of the Department of Homeland Secu-
9 rity (referred to in this subsection as the “Chief”)
10 shall establish a grant program to provide grants in
11 an amount not to exceed \$500 to assist lawful per-
12 manent residents of the United States who declare
13 an intent to apply for citizenship in the United
14 States to meet the requirements under section 312
15 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C.
16 1423).

17 (2) USE OF FUNDS.—Grant funds awarded
18 under this subsection shall be paid directly to an ac-
19 credited institution of higher education or other
20 qualified educational institution (as determined by
21 the Chief) for tuition, fees, books, and other edu-
22 cational resources required by a course on the
23 English language in which the lawful permanent
24 resident is enrolled.

1 (3) APPLICATION.—A lawful permanent resi-
2 dent desiring a grant under this subsection shall
3 submit an application to the Chief at such time, in
4 such manner, and accompanied by such information
5 as the Chief may reasonably require.

6 (4) PRIORITY.—If insufficient funds are avail-
7 able to award grants to all qualified applicants, the
8 Chief shall give priority based on the financial need
9 of the applicants.

10 (5) NOTICE.—The Secretary, upon relevant reg-
11 istration of a lawful permanent resident with the
12 Department of Homeland Security, shall notify such
13 lawful permanent resident of the availability of
14 grants under this subsection for lawful permanent
15 residents who declare an intent to apply for United
16 States citizenship.

17 (b) FASTER CITIZENSHIP FOR ENGLISH FLUENCY.—
18 Section 316 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8
19 U.S.C. 1427) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
20 lowing:

21 “(g) A lawful permanent resident of the United
22 States who demonstrates English fluency, in accordance
23 with regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Homeland
24 Security, in consultation with the Secretary of State, will
25 satisfy the residency requirement under subsection (a)

1 upon the completion of 4 years of continuous legal resi-
 2 dency in the United States.”.

3 **SEC. 102. SAVINGS PROVISION.**

4 Nothing in this Act shall be construed to—

5 (1) modify the English language requirements
 6 for naturalization under section 312(a)(1) of the Im-
 7 migration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C.
 8 1423(a)(1)); or

9 (2) influence the naturalization test redesign
 10 process of the Office of Citizenship of the United
 11 States Citizenship and Immigration Services (except
 12 for the requirement under section 301(b)).

13 **TITLE II—EDUCATION ABOUT**
 14 **THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE**

15 **SEC. 201. AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP GRANT PROGRAM.**

16 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish a
 17 competitive grant program to provide financial assistance
 18 for—

19 (1) efforts by entities (including veterans and
 20 patriotic organizations) certified by the Office of
 21 Citizenship of the Department of Homeland Security
 22 to promote the patriotic integration of prospective
 23 citizens into the American way of life by providing
 24 civics, history, and English as a second language
 25 courses, with a specific emphasis on attachment to

1 principles of the Constitution of the United States,
2 the heroes of American history (including military
3 heroes), and the meaning of the Oath of Allegiance;
4 and

5 (2) other activities approved by the Secretary to
6 promote the patriotic integration of prospective citi-
7 zens and the implementation of the Immigration and
8 Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101 et seq.), including
9 grants—

10 (A) to promote an understanding of the
11 form of government and history of the United
12 States; and

13 (B) to promote an attachment to the prin-
14 ciples of the Constitution of the United States
15 and the well being and happiness of the people
16 of the United States.

17 (b) ACCEPTANCE OF GIFTS.—The Secretary may ac-
18 cept and use gifts from the United States Citizenship
19 Foundation, established under section 202(a), for grants
20 under this section.

21 (c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
22 are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be
23 necessary to carry out this section.

1 **SEC. 202. FUNDING FOR THE OFFICE OF CITIZENSHIP.**

2 (a) AUTHORIZATION.—The Secretary, acting through
3 the Director of the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration
4 Services, is authorized to establish the United States Citi-
5 zenship Foundation (referred to in this section as the
6 “Foundation”), an organization duly incorporated in the
7 District of Columbia, exclusively for charitable and edu-
8 cational purposes to support the functions of the Office
9 of Citizenship, which shall include the patriotic integration
10 of prospective citizens into—

11 (1) American common values and traditions, in-
12 cluding an understanding of the history of the
13 United States and the principles of the Constitution
14 of the United States; and

15 (2) civic traditions of the United States, includ-
16 ing the Pledge of Allegiance, respect for the flag of
17 the United States, and voting in public elections.

18 (b) DEDICATED FUNDING.—

19 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not less than 1.5 percent of
20 the funds made available to the Bureau of Citizen-
21 ship and Immigration Services (including fees and
22 appropriated funds) shall be dedicated to the func-
23 tions of the Office of Citizenship, which shall include
24 the patriotic integration of prospective citizens
25 into—

1 (A) American common values and tradi-
 2 tions, including an understanding of American
 3 history and the principles of the Constitution of
 4 the United States; and

5 (B) civic traditions of the United States,
 6 including the Pledge of Allegiance, respect for
 7 the flag of the United States, and voting in
 8 public elections.

9 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of
 10 Congress that dedicating increased funds to the Of-
 11 fice of Citizenship should not result in an increase
 12 in fees charged by the Bureau of Citizenship and
 13 Immigration Services.

14 (c) GIFTS.—

15 (1) TO FOUNDATION.—The Foundation may so-
 16 licit, accept, and make gifts of money and other
 17 property in accordance with section 501(c)(3) of the
 18 Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

19 (2) FROM FOUNDATION.—The Office of Citizen-
 20 ship may accept gifts from the Foundation to sup-
 21 port the functions of the Office.

22 (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
 23 are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be
 24 necessary to carry out the mission of the Office of Citizen-

1 ship, including the patriotic integration of prospective citi-
2 zens into—

3 (1) American common values and traditions, in-
4 cluding an understanding of American history and
5 the principles of the Constitution of the United
6 States; and

7 (2) civic traditions of the United States, includ-
8 ing the Pledge of Allegiance, respect for the flag of
9 the United States, and voting in public elections.

10 **SEC. 203. RESTRICTION ON USE OF FUNDS.**

11 Amounts appropriated to carry out a program under
12 this title may not be used to organize individuals for the
13 purpose of political activism or advocacy.

14 **SEC. 204. REPORTING REQUIREMENT.**

15 The Chief of the Office of Citizenship shall submit
16 to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pen-
17 sions and the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate,
18 and the Committee on Education and the Workforce and
19 the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Rep-
20 resentatives, an annual report that contains—

21 (1) a list of the entities that have received
22 funds from the Office of Citizenship during the re-
23 porting period under this title and the amount of
24 funding received by each such entity;

(2) an evaluation of the extent to which grants received under this title and title I successfully promoted an understanding of—

(A) the English language; and

(B) American history and government, including the heroes of American history, the meaning of the Oath of Allegiance, and an attachment to the principles of the Constitution of the United States; and

(3) information about the number of lawful permanent residents who were able to achieve the knowledge described under paragraph (2) as a result of the grants provided under this title and title I.

TITLE III—CODIFYING THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

SEC. 301. OATH OR AFFIRMATION OF RENUNCIATION AND ALLEGIANCE.

(a) REVISION OF OATH.—Section 337 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1448) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by striking “under section 310(b) an oath” and all that follows through “personal moral code.” and inserting “under section 310(b), the oath (or affirmation) of allegiance prescribed in subsection (e).”; and

1 (2) by adding at the end the following:

2 “(e)(1) Subject to paragraphs (2) and (3), the oath
3 (or affirmation) of allegiance prescribed in this subsection
4 is as follows: ‘I take this oath solemnly, freely, and without
5 any mental reservation. I absolutely and entirely renounce
6 all allegiance to any foreign state or power of which I have
7 been a subject or citizen. My fidelity and allegiance from
8 this day forward are to the United States of America. I
9 will bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution and
10 laws of the United States, and will support and defend
11 them against all enemies, foreign and domestic. I will bear
12 arms, or perform noncombatant military or civilian serv-
13 ice, on behalf of the United States when required by law.
14 This I do solemnly swear, so help me God.’.

15 “(2) If a person, by reason of religious training and
16 belief (or individual interpretation thereof) or for other
17 reasons of good conscience, cannot take the oath pre-
18 scribed in paragraph (1)—

19 “(A) with the term ‘oath’ included, the term
20 ‘affirmation’ shall be substituted for the term ‘oath’;
21 and

22 “(B) with the phrase ‘so help me God’ included,
23 the phrase ‘so help me God’ shall be omitted.

24 “(3) If a person shows by clear and convincing evi-
25 dence to the satisfaction of the Attorney General that such

1 person, by reason of religious training and belief, cannot
 2 take the oath prescribed in paragraph (1)—

3 “(A) because such person is opposed to the
 4 bearing of arms in the Armed Forces of the United
 5 States, the words ‘bear arms, or’ shall be omitted;
 6 and

7 “(B) because such person is opposed to any
 8 type of service in the Armed Forces of the United
 9 States, the words ‘bear arms, or’ and ‘noncombatant
 10 military or’ shall be omitted.

11 “(4) As used in this subsection, the term ‘religious
 12 training and belief’—

13 “(A) means a belief of an individual in relation
 14 to a Supreme Being involving duties superior to
 15 those arising from any human relation; and

16 “(B) does not include essentially political, socio-
 17 logical, or philosophical views or a merely personal
 18 moral code.

19 “(5) Any reference in this title to ‘oath’ or ‘oath of
 20 allegiance’ under this section shall be deemed to refer to
 21 the oath (or affirmation) of allegiance prescribed under
 22 this subsection.”.

23 (b) HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT TEST.—The Sec-
 24 retary shall incorporate a knowledge and understanding

1 of the meaning of the Oath of Allegiance into the history
 2 and government test given to applicants for citizenship.

3 (c) NOTICE TO FOREIGN EMBASSIES.—Upon the
 4 naturalization of a new citizen, the Secretary, in coopera-
 5 tion with the Secretary of State, shall notify the embassy
 6 of the country of which the new citizen was a citizen or
 7 subject that such citizen has—

8 (1) renounced allegiance to that foreign coun-
 9 try; and

10 (2) sworn allegiance to the United States.

11 (d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
 12 subsection (a) shall take effect on the date that is 6
 13 months after the date of the enactment of this Act.

14 **TITLE IV—CELEBRATING NEW** 15 **CITIZENS**

16 **SEC. 401. ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW CITIZENS AWARD PRO-** 17 **GRAM.**

18 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established a new
 19 citizens award program to recognize citizens who—

20 (1) have made an outstanding contribution to
 21 the United States; and

22 (2) are naturalized during the 10-year period
 23 ending on the date of such recognition.

24 (b) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—The President is authorized
2 to present a medal, in recognition of outstanding
3 contributions to the United States, to citizens de-
4 scribed in subsection (a).

5 (2) MAXIMUM NUMBER OF AWARDS.—Not more
6 than 10 citizens may receive a medal under this sec-
7 tion in any calendar year.

8 (c) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—The Secretary of the
9 Treasury shall strike a medal with suitable emblems, de-
10 vices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the President.

11 (d) NATIONAL MEDALS.—The medals struck pursu-
12 ant to this section are national medals for purposes of
13 chapter 51 of title 31, United States Code.

14 **SEC. 402. NATURALIZATION CEREMONIES.**

15 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in consultation
16 with the Director of the National Park Service, the Archi-
17 vist of the United States, and other appropriate Federal
18 officials, shall develop and implement a strategy to en-
19 hance the public awareness of naturalization ceremonies.

20 (b) VENUES.—In developing the strategy under this
21 section, the Secretary shall consider the use of outstanding
22 and historic locations as venues for select naturalization
23 ceremonies.

24 (c) REPORTING REQUIREMENT.—The Secretary shall
25 annually submit a report to Congress that contains—

- 1 (1) the content of the strategy developed under
- 2 this section; and
- 3 (2) the progress made towards the implementa-
- 4 tion of such strategy.

Calendar No. 606

110TH CONGRESS
2^D Session
S. 2721

A BILL

To amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to prescribe the binding oath or affirmation of renunciation and allegiance required to be naturalized as a citizen of the United States, to encourage and support the efforts of prospective citizens of the United States to become citizens, and for other purposes.

MARCH 6, 2008

Read the second time and placed on the calendar